

Stony Brook University – Undergraduate Student Government – Senate

Regular Meeting – Thursday, September 18, 2008

Meeting called to order at 7:41 p.m Executive Vice-President Geeta Malieckal presiding.

0.0 Attendance

Members present:

Senator Matthew Anderson
Senator Sungyong Bae
Senator Aharon Benelyahoo
Senator Aneta Bose
Senator Ebbie Boutehsaz
Senator Kevin Brady
Senator Shahzad Chaudry
Senator Shamell Forbes – Late, arrived at 7:46 p.m.
Senator Jonathan Harounian
Senator Steven Hauptman – Left early, at 8:30 p.m.
Senator Adam Kent
Senator John Kriscenski
Senator Dae Young Lee
Senator Sean Moore
Senator Lauren Potenza
Senator Ashley Reji
Senator Kathleen Schultz
Senator Blake Wind

Members absent:

Senator Kirin Mahmud

Guest present:

President Jeffrey Akita
Vice-President of Clubs and Organizations Suhas Shreeharshan
Vice-President of Communications Alan Suchecki
Vice-President of Academic Brian Desrosiers

1.0 Approval of the Agenda

Senator Kent moved to adopt the agenda. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2.0 Approval of the Minutes from the September 11, 2008 Meeting

Senator Anderson pointed out a large section of the minutes that was unnecessarily repeated later in the document. The Chair clarified that the original document did not have that section.

Senator Anderson moved to approve the minutes. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3.0 Child Care Services Contract (*tabled at previous meeting*)

The Chair clarified the difference between a motion to lay on the table and a motion to postpone.

Senator Brady moved to take the item from the table. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The Senate reviewed information the Administrative Director obtained regarding the Child Care Services and their contract with USG.

Senator Anderson asked for a copy of the contract, with which Senator Brady provided him.

Senator Forbes moved to approve the Child Care Services contract. Senator Bose seconded.

Senator Brady indicated that he was caught off guard by the motion to approve the contract and expressed a desire to amend the contract to reduce the funding to \$30,000 rather than the current \$40,000 in anticipation of 10% budget cuts.

Senator Benelyahoo asked Senator Brady to explain his reasoning.

Senator Brady said that we are facing a 10.3% budget cut from the State, which will reduce all budgets at Stony Brook – including USG’s budget. In light of recent economic developments the cuts may be more than 10.3%. All monies allocated by the Senate need to be looked at carefully. The \$10,000 the Senate will take back from Child Care Services should be set aside for a rainy day fund for Child Care Services for next semester. All organizations will be looked at hard – for example, the Statesman who may have their funding cut and told to raise the additional money through advertising.

Senator Benelyahoo said that he understands the insurance policy Senator Brady is trying to create but did not understand how that helps Child Care Services now. The \$40,000 they receive benefits undergraduate students this semester, he questioned Senator Brady as to why they should take the money now and give it to them next semester.

Senator Potenza stated that she felt \$40,000 for 11-18 undergraduate students, in spite of the quality of the service, is a bit excessive. During any other semester, she would suggest a lesser cut, and agreed with Senator Brady that the cut funding should be reserved as a rainy day fund.

President Jeffrey Akita stated that USG funds clubs annually – any budget adjustments would be for the year, not per semester.

Senator Forbes stated his feeling that USG needs to be more conscious of what it is doing but feels that all the weight is being placed on Child Care Services. There are other clubs and organization that can be looked at and cut but to cut a quarter of an organization's money when the program is an imperative program is unfair. Child Care Services is very important on campus. The number of students served may increase, however either way to cut their money out of nowhere when they've been receiving consistent funding is unfair.

Senator Moore stated that although he sees the logic in Senators Brady's and Potenza's proposal he wondered if there was any way to confirm that the funding will be available next year.

Senator Brady said that the \$10,000 cut would be offered to them next semester. He stated that the Senate would be leaving a legacy by beginning an austerity program now. By cutting Child Care Services' funding, we are determining if they can survive on less money but as soon as they have a problem, the Senate can give them the money back.

Senator Bose directed Senator Brady to cut all clubs and organizations, not just Child Care Services if he is concerned with the 10% budget cuts. She stated that Senator Brady was unfairly focusing on Child Care Services and further stated that it does not make sense to take \$10,000 and put it someplace in case you need it. She warned that if other clubs and organizations were to find out about the money they would want access to it. She further warned Senator Brady not to experiment with Child Care Services and see if they survive and reiterated that is unfair to focus on them.

Senator Anderson asked if Senator Brady was suggesting that the Senate take \$10,000 from Child Care Services during the Fall Revision Process and leave it floating for them.

Senator Brady answered yes and went on to say that this would be the beginning of a process to ensure that organizations receive a moderate amount of funding. He also stated that he is not trying to experiment on Child Care.

President Akita stated that the State's 10.3% budgets would not affect the Student Activity Fee whatsoever. The Chair explained that the Student Activity Fee is USG's primary source of funding.

Senator Kent stated that the \$10,000 rainy day fund is absolutely pointless and went on to say that the Senate should either give them the \$40,000 or cut them outright.

Senator Kriscenski pointed out that the Child Care Services was allocated \$40,000 last year through the budget process and recommended that the Senate support that originally allocated amount rather than be perceived as "Indian Givers".

Senator Wind stated that he had wanted to give Senators Potenza and Brady an opportunity to state their case. He explained that ideas such as this have been floated by other Senators involved with the budget in the past but the Senate has not done anything

like this because there is no way to ensure continuity throughout the year. He further stated that the Senate's duty is to serve the people who are here now. If we have to deal with cuts then there will be cuts but only on a fair, systemic basis.

Senator Anderson applauded Senators Potenza and Brady for their efforts but respectfully disagreed with them on this issue. He stated Child Care Services is the type of service wherein it is difficult to know when it will be needed. Furthermore, he indicated that the \$10,000 rainy day fund is a bad idea because then no one benefits from the money, which is nevertheless lost. He went on to say that since the budget cut doesn't affect the Student Activity Fee, the Senate should approve the contract for this important service.

Senator Schultz recommended that the Senators consider how this might affect prospective students who might be attracted to this school because of the Child Care Services.

Senator Benelyahoo said that the Child Care Services is helping students who really don't have the money to pay for their own childcare since the fees are based on family income. He stated that the Budget Committee is the proper venue to make budget cuts and urged the Senator to approve the \$40,000 now.

Senator Potenza stated that the undergraduate population is approximately 20,000 students and for 18 students to benefit from \$40,000 is unfair. She expressed her feeling that the proportions should be better utilized.

Senator Kent reminded everyone that funding for clubs and organizations is not dependent on the number of people in the group but rather on need.

Senator Brady said that while the idea that funding is based on need is a great ideal that is not the way money works --- especially when there are financial problems. He went on to say that even if the budget cuts don't affect the Student Activity Fee they will cause tuition to rise which may cause the Student Activity Fee to be reduced. He also stated that although the \$40,000 was approved last year, he was not a Senator last year and he still needed to look at the funding. He finally stated that the Senate has established a precedent that there needs to be a review of the funding for all clubs and organizations.

Senator Forbes stated that while he understands Senator Brady's point, he doesn't feel the Senate is educated enough to cut a quarter of their funding and the Senate cannot just arbitrarily cut funding. He stated that Child Care Services is really a great services and there needs to be a ton more research before the cut could be made.

Senator Hauptman called the question. 15-3-0. Motion carried with the requisite supermajority.

Previously called question – Senator Forbes moved to approve the Child Care Services contract, Senator Bose seconded. 15-3-0. Motion carried.

4.0 Executive Council Reports

The Vice-President of Clubs and Organizations, Suhas Shreeharshan discussed USG Leadership Day. He asked the Senators for suggestions and reviewed his progress in planning this event. He described his progress in meeting with all the clubs on campus, and explained that the process is slow because there are 150 clubs.

Senator Anderson asked which clubs he has contacted. Vice-President Shreeharshan stated that he has attended Chabad and SASA meetings.

Senator Bose stated that since the Student Activities Board (SAB) receives the most money in USG, the Vice-President should consider attending their meetings, which are Monday evenings at 7:00p.m.

Senator Brady stated his appreciation for the Vice-President's efforts and suggested that a calendar be made of all the meeting times for USG clubs and organizations so that they can all meet a USG Representative. The Vice-President supported this idea.

Vice-President of Communications Alan Suchecki discussed his work with the SAB Chair to put out a variety of promotional items including flyers. He also described his work on the USG website which has been massively overhauled since last year. He is actively working with the Treasure to get the online-based budget application system working well as well as the hearing schedule. He directed any Senators in need of an e-mail address to contact him.

Senator Bose asked the Vice-President what plans, other than flyers, he had to promote events on campus. The Vice-President indicated his desire to create a SAB website. Senator Bose asked the Vice-President what he planned to do for the other clubs and organizations on campus in need of promotional help. The Vice-President indicated that although it is not necessarily his responsibility to help those clubs, he will do what he can.

Vice-President of Academic Affairs Brian Desrosiers discussed his efforts to revitalize the PASS program. He is currently interviewing tutor candidates and implementing a new e-mail system to deal with tutoring requests. He reported that tutoring will commence in two weeks.

Senator Forbes asked the Vice-President what his position entails other than PASS. The Vice-President explained that while PASS is a large part of his responsibility, once the kinks have been worked out of the program, he'd like to work on fostering a better working relationship with the University Vice-President of Academic Affairs as well as the Career Center.

Senator Wind asked how many tutors PASS was expected to accommodate this year. The Vice-President replied that he has interviewed 25 and is only allowed to hire 33 however he is expecting 50-60 students in need of tutoring within the next two weeks. Senator

Wind expressed an interest in helping with the program and the Vice-President directed him to join the Senate's Academic Affairs committee.

Senator Kent asked how many students have expressed an interest in receiving tutoring. The Vice-President replied 50-60.

Senator Brady asked if there was a master plan in place for PASS, looking forward to next year if the load increases, in light of larger classes and less professors. The Vice-President stated that the program has improved this year as shown by the projected start date of the program which is two weeks earlier than last year's start date.

The Chair informed the students that the Vice-President of Student Life submitted a report but could not attend the meeting.

5.0 President's Appointments

Mashuf Khorammabadi the previous SSC Chair, is being re-appointed.

Mr. Khorammabadi briefly discussed his experience.

Senator Kent spoke in support of him, describing personal positive anecdotes.

Senator Kriscenski enthusiastically supported his approval and moved to approve the appointment. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

6.0 Recommendations

The Ultimate Frisbee club is applying for a line budget, because they have outlived their SSC funding eligibility.

Senator Kent asked the SSC Chair what they did with the money they received from SSC. The Chair explained that they attended a tournament in Pennsylvania.

Senator Benelyahoo moved to approve the recommendation. Senator Boutehsaz seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

7.0 Announcements

The Chair provided Senators with information on standing committees of the University Senate and asked Senators to indicate their interest(s) so she can consider that information when making appointments.

The Chair reminded the Senators that all committees must elect a chair and set a meeting time within the week and also reminded Senators that their reports were due before the commencement of tonight's meeting.

The Chair announced that Professor Norman Goodman will be coming to the Senate meeting next week to discuss budget cuts.

The Chair provided the Senator with information on how to prepare a committee report.

7.0 Open Agenda

Senator Kriscenski reminded the members of the Elections and Referenda Committee that there is meeting directly after the adjournment of the Senate meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.